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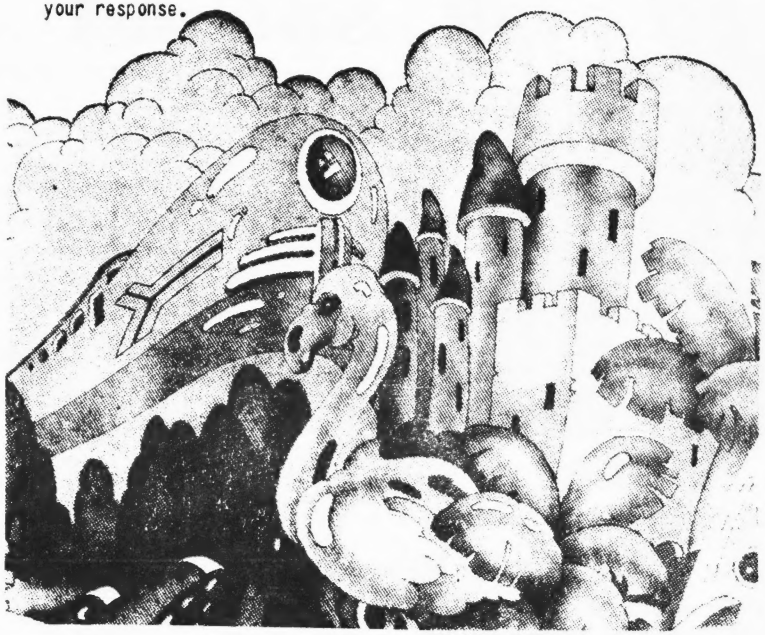

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AMTRAK TRAVEL AGENT

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 2 NO. 22
NOVEMBER 20, 1972

#48

"HOPE IT'S NOT SIDETRACKED . . . . . "

Reprinted from the Dallas Morning News.

ON THE COVER:

This cartoon reprinted from the Dallas Morning News reflects that city's concern over whether the forthcoming Amtrak service to Mexico will definitely get running through Dallas. Sometime early in 1973 the Mexican service should get underway.

LETTERS

I am writing again, this time to express appreciation for the most informative and fascinating Oct. 2nd issue of RAIL TRAVEL - especially the story by the student Amtrak ticket agent in the Los Angeles Reservation Bureau. This provides the most concrete information I've yet seen on exactly what was happening - how heavy the travel was - on trains this summer, and what services are needed that do not now exist, specifically the Los Angeles-Salt Lake City-Denver and overnight LARK services.

Richard L. Day
Department of Geography
University of Idaho

Moscow, Ida.

How long does it take the Southern Pacific to repair, or contract out for repair one Tavern-Lounge-Observation Car??

On October 18 one of the cars assigned regularly to "The Coast Daylight", car #3345, I believe, although I'm not at all sure of the number, had an electrical fire upon leaving Oakland which caused the car to be bad-ordered at San Jose. The railroad or Amtrak substituted Lounge Car #3351 (ex-SF 1349), a very nice car, by the way, as the lounge facility.

However, as observed this evening, November 4, #SF 1349 was STILL in the consist (along with ex UP Diner 4816) and NO Tavern-Lounge-Observation. All I can say is Shame, Shame.

Peter Putnam Bretz

Malibu, Calif.

Equipment notes for HIAWATHA service trains in the current Amtrak timetable deserve some explanation. Trains 321 and 328 are composed of the same equipment as the ABRAHAM LINCOLN, and trains 322 and 325 are identical to the PRAIRIE STATE. These runs serve to ferry equipment for the St. Louis trains up to Milwaukee from the CMStP&P's Western Avenue coach yards in Chicago, where all equipment on Pacific Northwest and St. Louis-Chicago-Milwaukee trains is serviced. Trains 324-327 are listed as having a snack bar, but in reality they carry a GN ranch car. These trains also have a dome (BN 3480, a 1949 rebuild from a standard prewar coach) although it is not listed in the timetable.

The ABRAHAM LINCOLN's ex-CB&Q dome parlor observations are currently getting the Amtrak treatment. As a result, first-class patrons may ride in either one of the venerable GM&O parlors or the former GN parlor-observation Port of Seattle, which has been refurbished at Beech Grove.

Equipment shortages have resulted in odd car assignments here. For example, the PANAMA LIMITED occasionally carries an SCL lounge instead of a snack bar coach. The BROADWAY can be found with a SILVER METEOR coach lounge instead of a full midtrain lounge. Both are running 17-18 cars and usually full, giving rise to rumors that second-service trains will be placed on these routes next spring.

Michael W. Blaszak

Park Ridge, Ill.

I recently had occasion to travel from New York to Montreal on the new Amtrak Service (Oct. 27, 1972) and then from Montreal to Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the CN's "Ocean" (Oct. 28, 1972). The two-part trip was interesting in that it allowed me to observe Amtrak's new train as well as compare it with a CN long-distance run.

I approached the ticket counter in New York with some trepidation, in view of some recent reports, but was pleasantly surprised to find no lines and an efficient, if not warm, agent who reserved me a seat and sold me a ticket with a minimum of ado. The train left on time, and was reasonably clean. The consist included two E-8's (one Amtrak, one PC), two sleepers (one Southern, one Amtrak-ex-SCL), a buffet-lounge-observation (Budd, ex-C&O 1921, flat end), and four coaches (Amtrak 7000, smooth side, ex-RF&P 840; SCL City of Miami in brown and orange; and two SCL Budd's). The cars, especially 7000, were overheated, but so is virtually every building in the east, so that is not a unique complaint against Amtrak. The crews were courteous and efficient, again if not quite warm, a welcome surprise after riding on the PRR and NYC several years ago. The train arrived in Montreal on time, and was well-patronized. Several people on the train mentioned that they were taking advantage of the opportunity to travel from New Jersey and Maryland to Vermont without having to drive. Most seemed pleased and happy with the new service.

At Montreal, I picked up an upper berth reservation that I had telephoned in to CN's San Francisco office two days before without a hitch. The train left on time, was immaculate, had well-maintained equipment and a fine crew, who, this time, were not only efficient and friendly, but even on the warm side of the line. The fifteen-car train (ten for Halifax, five for Sydney and the boat to Newfoundland) was well-patronized, almost full. It carried five sleepers, a diner, two lounges, four coaches, and three baggage cars, pulled by three F-units. The train was on-time over the entire 840 mile trip, the meals (included in the ticket) were very good, the lounge car service was good, there was bingo in the diner after supper, and a great party in the coach lounge thrown by some Newfoundlanders on their way home from jobs in Quebec and Ontario. They're great people, and quite unique. The atmosphere on the train was strictly upbeat and happy, and most people on the train seemed to think quite highly of the CNR and its service. The lounge car was a rebuilt heavyweight, and quite well done. I got off the train in a rainy Halifax with a good feeling about a pleasant trip.

Donald P. Grant

San Luis Obispo, Calif.

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STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor at Large; Steve Farrar, East Coast Editor; Doug Ellis, East Coast Photographer.

It was interesting to observe the operation of the OXNARD DAYLIGHT during the first part of October as reported in RTN Vol. 2, No. 18.

My job is a taxi driver for Yellow Cab in the city and I try to check out the daily consist of #11-12, and 13-14 as they come through. The consist came down from Oakland, discharged passengers, and then an Oxnard-based SW switcher pulled the train up the wye at Montalvo, turned it and back down, and remained overnight at the Oxnard station. Special water servicing pipes were installed, and, as you said, many problems. I noticed that on days of the short consist about three Greyhound MC-7s would pull in from L.A., and about seven of the MCIs were used on "Starlight" days. The buses and drivers would lay over the entire day at Oxnard between runs. On the night of Oct. 5-6, the short consist was run via Santa Paula and Saugus to L.A. with a meet at Piru as well; and the "long" set of equipment was brought up the same way.

Finally, the last day, the train was supposed to run south all the way to LAUPT, but I observed the buses still waiting. The train was about ½ hour late, yet the ticket agent didn't really know what was happening. As the train pulled in, I noticed people still sitting in the diner, enjoying a leisurely meal, the passengers all snug in their seats, and none of the madhouse that usually had taken place. The conductor thought the train would continue on, the buses still sat. The train did, too, for about 10 minutes, then everyone began getting off and into the buses. Then there was the madhouse. Apparently, word had not arrived to the train crew, although train radios were in use, and a stop at Santa Barbara 45 minutes previously could have brought that info. But no. The Amtrak girl was really upset because people had been pulled out of the diner in the middle of the meal. Then it was discovered that the train WAS AFTER ALL going ALL THE WAY into Los Angeles! But why was everyone getting off? After the hubbub died down, and the buses were departing, and the train was pulling out, I asked a gentleman who identified himself as an SP trainmaster, just what was the problem. He said, "Who are you?" "Who do you work for," etc. When informed I was a train rider, he called to another employee who was asking about the situation that I was "...just a bystander". He gave me a patronizing, hurried explanation as how everything will be fine any other time you want to ride, etc. I asked about whether passengers were given a choice as to train or bus. He said no. Why take them off? I asked. He became very belligerent and nasty (like Pennsylvania RR), and as much as told me to flake off. He said I could have ridden the train down to L.A. if I had wanted to, subject to delay, but I would have been the only passenger. What was this trainmaster trying to hide? Just what was the mixup? What did the average passenger think?

Peter P. Bretz

Malibu, Calif.

I rode the train through the plains of Spain in mid-September. I took the Talgo train #452 from Madrid to Cadiz. This is a distance of 574 kilometers or about 350 miles. We departed at 2:55 p.m. and arrived in Seville at 8:59 p.m., exactly on time. Thus, the train averages about 58 miles an hour, including about six stops.

The one-way, first-class fare was 1106 pesetas, which is about $18.00.

The Talgo is the Spanish Railway System's (RENFE) number one train. It is a sleek, low, electric-powered streamliner, which looks very much like, and really is very much like, the Metroliners, except for the electric power. There were eight coaches, all first-class, I believe. There were no compartments as on most European trains. Baggage was carried on by porters but placed above your seat.

Two coaches were one-half snack and liquor bars. Here you could buy a cheese sandwich for 21 pesetas (35¢)--toasted, it was 30 pesetas (50¢). Spanish brandy was only 14 pesetas (23¢) per shot. There was also pop, and, of course, wine.

As in the Metroliner, lunch was served at your seat with complete linen and silver service for 225 pesetas ($3.75). This included a half a bottle of wine or half a bottle of mineral water. There was no choice of menu. The first course was egg omelet with minced ham, the second course was thin sliced round steak with fried potatoes and peas. Fresh fruit was served for dessert.

The ride was quiet, the air-conditioning worked well and there was the best hi-fi system which I have ever heard on any train or plane. All together, it was a delightful excursion.

Robert E. Nelson

Green Bay, Wisc.

On the SUPER CHIEF/EL CAP leaving Chicago Oct. 12 we had two Amtrak hostesses. One was making her first trip out--they made that trip really pleasant. They got on the loudspeaker system and pointed out the interesting things along the way, and were really great. I don't know what Amtrak is paying these young ladies, but as far as I'm concerned, it's worth it.

On the SUNSET LIMITED (#2) out of Tucson we had a conductor by the name of C. E. Scoggins. He ran from Tucson east to El Paso. The conductor's desk was in the club car, and this gentleman, after he was done with his work, sat with us, chatted, and pointed out things and places of interest. He was really great.

All in all, the crews on the trains that I traveled were courteous and very friendly. The equipment was good. I don't know where people got the idea that the SUNSET LIMITED was bad. I found nothing wrong with it except that it ran late.

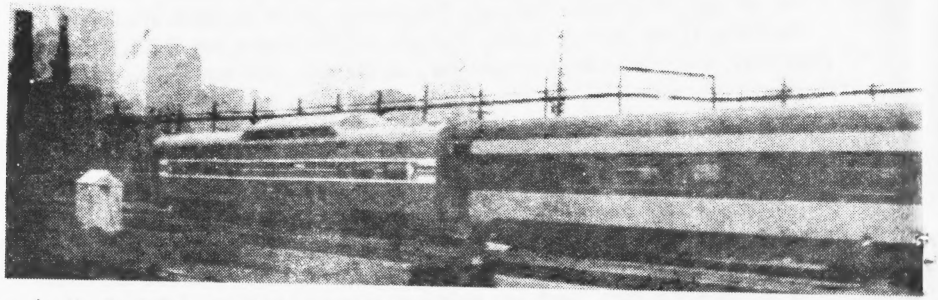
The meals on the trains were good, and the prices very reasonable. I have one big gripe, though: why doesn't Amtrak lower the fares, especially in the Milwaukee-Chicago corridor? $7.35 by bus, $8.75 by train--a little bit out of line, isn't it? I would think that the more people that could afford to ride trains, the better your business would be...

I always wanted to find out what it was like to be treated like a king. I sure found out by riding Amtrak on that trip. It was a fantastic experience.

Kenneth A. Kielpinski

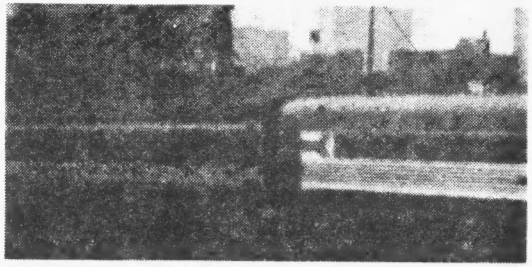
Milwaukee, Wisc.

MORE ON THE GENERAL MOTORS SPECIAL TRAINS



In the last issue we had a preliminary report on the five Amtrak special trains to the General Motors executive conference at White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. Here's more:

Motive power for one of the two Detroit trains, the Toledo train and the Indianapolis train consisted of 3 C&O Chessie System GP40-2's which had rolled off the LaGrange production line only days before. Heat for these 3 trains was provided by two BN (ex-GN) heater cars (converted F units) with one behind the locos and one on the rear. The other Detroit train had 2 of the new Chessie units and a UP E-8 B unit. To help the B unit heat the train, a UP heater-baggage-dorm was on the rear. The N.Y. train had 3 black PC E8's without heat on the rear (PC C's have 2 steam generators per unit).



Of the 93 cars used for the five trains, 37 were leased from Canadian National, 3 from Southern Railway, one from MoPac, and at least eleven from Union Pacific that had been used recently by Auto-Train. Of the cars provided by Amtrak, 16 were newly refurbished ones slated for New York-Florida service beginning December 15.

All equipment, with the exception of 5 baggage cars, was serviced at Clifton Forge, Virginia, while the 4-day conference was in session. The first Detroit train, color-coded as the "White Train," pulled out of Clifton Forge at 4:45pm Nov. 19. It arrived at White Sulphur Springs at 5:45pm to pick up the executives and a baggage car, and departed at 6:30pm. This operation was repeated at hourly intervals, as the "Brown Train" (to Detroit), the "Yellow Train" (for Toledo & Flint), the "Green Train" (for N.Y. & Washington), and the "Grey Train" (for Cincinnati & Indianapolis) carried returning GM VIP's home.

As space allows, here are some consist notes of the all-sleeper trains: White Train: 2 Chessie & 1 UP engine (see above); UP 5714 baggage, CN Battle River, Dauphin River, Moose River sleepers; UP Sun Manor, Sun Slope, Sun Skies (sleepers), 6206 club-lounge, 4810 & 4808 diners, 6203 club lounge, sleepers ("Sun" series) Lane, Cape, Lake, Villa, Isle, Point, Ridge, & Rest, and 304 baggage-dorm.

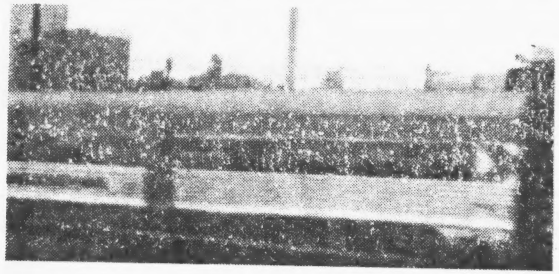
Brown Train: 3 Chessie units, GN 12 heater car, ATK (Amtrak) 1046 baggage; CN Burrard, Petawawa River, & Riviere St. Francois sleepers; ATK Star View & Placid Waters sleepers; CN Mt. Tekarra sleeper; ATK City of Chicago slpr-lounge; CN 1350 & 1339 diners; ATK City of Cleveland slpr-lounge; CN Mt. Robson & Mt. Albreda sleepers; CB&Q Silver Dove, Swan & Quail sleepers; CN Grande Riviere, Naiscuit River, & Churchill Falls sleepers; GN 15 heater car.

Yellow Train: 3 Chessie units; GN 11 heater car; ATK 1159 baggage; CN Sisiboo Falls, Cilcotin River, & Terra Nova River sleepers; SCL Ocala & Homestead sleepers; CN 1345 diner, Gaiete lounge, & Mt. Fitzwilliam sleeper; CB&Q Silver Pelican sleeper; UP Placid Lake sleeper; CN sleepers Clearwater River, Warpath River, Deep River, Belle River, Mt. Edith Cavell; CN Vogue lounge & 1343 diner; GN 13 heater car.

Green Train: 3 PC units; ATK 1029 baggage; CN Riviere Cloche sleeper; SCL Avon Park, ATK Star Bay, SCL Magnolia Gardens, ATK 2293 & Placid Harbor sleepers; ATK Woodland Strea sleeper-lounge; ATK 4622 & 4623 twin-unit diners; ATK Laurel Stream sleeper-lounge; sleepers ATK Placid Meadow, SP 9402, SCL Hialeah & Mt. Vernon, SR Royal Court, Luther Calvin Norris & Royal Palm.

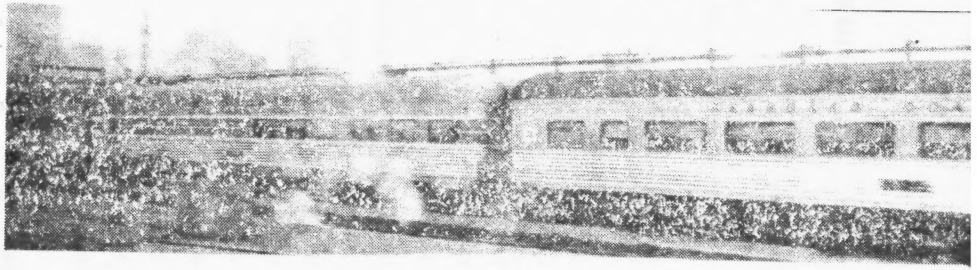
Grey Train: 3 Chessie units; GN 14 heater car; AT&SF 3544 baggage; CN sleepers Topsail Falls, Thunder Bay, & Bon Soir; ACL (SCL) Greenville diner; sleepers UP Placid Sea, CN Nechako River & Glace Bay; MoPac 11 lounge; sleepers CN Chaleur Bay, ATK Star Scene, Star Vale, & Venice, & CB&Q Silver Thrush; CN Harmonie lounge; SCL 5960 diner; CN sleepers Mt. Resplendent & Torch River; GN 10 heater car.

In the accompanying photos, made in the Chicago yards Nov. 12 thru the window of a moving train (thus the low quality), consists for the GM specials are being made up. The trains were to leave their points of origin for the conference Nov. 15. John A. Mills of Little Rock, Ark., has called our attention to the fact that the dome in the top photo, incorrectly identified as "Moonlight Dome" in our last issue, must be either Amtrak 9420 or 9421.



Amtrak furnished specially-printed menus for the occasion. Dinner menu bore large blue & silver covers similar to those of the SUPER CHIEF. A message inside, over Roger Lewis's signature, read: "Welcome aboard. We of Amtrak welcome you of General Motors to our special trains operated for your enjoyment and comfort en route to White Sulphur Springs. For your trains we have endeavored to provide many of our rebuilt and refurbished cars; but since so many in our fleet are in this process, we have also borrowed cars from the Canadian National, Union Pacific, and Southern Railroads."

Dinner menus offered a choice of "Grilled Fresh Lake Superior Whitefish" or "Charcoal Broiled Thick Sirloin Steak." There was also a smaller special breakfast menu.



Photos by L. Souchong.

Amtrak On-Time Performance by Route

Routes	Trains Operated Oct.'72	Per cent On-Time Oct. 1972	Sept. 1972	Since Jan. 1
SHORT HAUL				
New York/Washington Metroliner	826	85.6	72.6	77.0
Conventional	833	97.2	96.1	95.1
Boston/Washington	395	77.5	65.8	63.1
New York/Boston Shore Route	299	75.3	59.5	77.5
Inland Route	446	81.4	89.5	86.2
New York/Buffalo	310	88.4	78.3	79.7
Philadelphia/Harrisburg	476	81.3	80.9	81.0
Washington/Parkersburg	62	80.6	88.3	74.5
Chicago/Carbondale	62	71.0	76.7	80.0
Chicago/Detroit	124	91.1	90.0	92.0
Chicago/Quincy	62	53.2	73.3	72.2
Milwaukee/St. Louis	124	77.4	80.8	75.4
Chicago/Milwaukee	186	89.3	87.8	93.1
Seattle/Portland	186	88.7	88.3	80.9
Oakland/Los Angeles	35	57.1	73.5	83.5
Los Angeles/San Diego	159	96.2	92.2	94.4
TOTAL SHORT HAUL	3759	85.3	83.1	83.7
LONG DISTANCE ROUTES				
New York/Chicago	62	16.1	3.3	52.0
New York/Florida	248	66.1	53.7	54.8
New York/Kansas City	62	17.7	11.7	25.4
Washington/St. Louis	62	58.1	41.7	50.8
Chicago/Washington	62	19.4	0.0	42.2
Cincinnati/Washington	62	45.2	75.0	54.0
Chicago/Newport News	62	40.3	50.0	49.6
Chicago/Florida	124	66.9	67.5	61.3
Chicago/New Orleans	62	16.1	15.0	23.8
Chicago/Houston	62	91.9	80.0	81.6
Chicago/Los Angeles	62	58.1	56.1	65.6
Chicago/Denver	36	83.3	83.3	88.5
Chicago/Oakland	26	34.6	50.0	64.2
Chicago/Seattle	62	80.6	78.3	61.3
Chicago/Minneapolis	36	97.2	97.1	87.6
Chicago/Minneapolis/ Spokane	26	76.9	76.9	64.3
New Orleans/Los Angeles	27	59.3	42.3	59.1
Seattle/San Diego	26	65.4	46.2	59.7
Washington/Montreal	62	56.5	0.0	53.8
TOTAL LONG DISTANCE	1231	55.6	50.4	55.8
TOTAL AMTRAK	5816	79.0	74.6	76.5

AMTRAK RELEASES OCTOBER ON-TIME PERFORMANCE DATA

At the end of November Amtrak made public its on-time performance data for the month of October. These figures are shown in the table below, separately for short- and long-distance routes. Data for September and for the year as a whole are given for comparison.

Amtrak summarized the report by noting that the performance had improved 4.6% over September, with 79% of its trains on time ("on time" is defined as within 5 minutes of scheduled end-point arrival). Best performers were the N.Y.-Washington conventional trains and the Chicago-Minneapolis segment of the EMPIRE BUILDER, a 97.2% on-time record in both cases. Best long-distance train was the TEXAS CHIEF, 91.9%.

While Amtrak did not single out the weak points of the report, one notes significant performance decrements on the Chicago-Quincy, Oakland-Los Angeles, Cincinnati-Washington, Chicago-Newport News, and Chicago-Oakland routes.

Main causes of delay, Amtrak said, were slow orders, passenger-related delays, equipment malfunctions, freight train interference, and signal failures.

Short-distance trains performed 2.2% better in October than in September, while long-distance runs showed a 5.1% improvement over the preceding month.

GREYHOUND PREPARES ANTI-AMTRAK THRUST

Greyhound Lines - West, headquartered in San Francisco, released a letter to employees Oct. 30 urging them to fight against Amtrak funding in Congress, and implying that Amtrak passenger loading increases have been made at the expense of Greyhound.

President F. L. Nagotte told employees that Amtrak riders increased 7.7% during last May and June, while Greyhound carried 7.6% fewer passengers the first half of this year. Said Nagotte: "Without a doubt, some of these gains included passengers diverted from Greyhound." He pointed out Amtrak's deficits, which "continue to be subsidized by the taxpayer, you and I." The letter listed in detail the deficits of each railroad under Amtrak, but made no mention of federal subsidies for highway construction and maintenance that Greyhound relies upon.

Nagotte directed his employees to write Congress: "...it is extremely important that we continue to point out the deficiencies of AMTRAK to friends, business associates, and government officials. A letter from you personally to your elected governmental representative has far more impact than you realize." He also urged employees toward greater efficiency and more courtesy and respect for the passengers.

Comparisons were made of the Kansas City-St. Louis and L.A.-San Diego routes, showing that Amtrak lost money on both with lower fares than Greyhound, while the buses showed a profit on each route.

BUDGET OFFICE'S VIEWS ON AMTRAK FUNDING

The White House's Office of Management and Budget, known to be cool towards releasing Congressionally-approved funds for Amtrak use, has replied to correspondents in noncommittal, though certainly not enthusiastic terms. When asked about the fate of Amtrak's $9.1 million voted for service to Mexico and other experimental routes, an office spokesman replied that OMB is "devoting considerable attention to the issue of rail passenger service" and that "the proper and necessary role of rail passenger service is being fully considered in the context of national transportation policies and needs."

The OMB spokesman pointed out that all parties have agreed that the two years from 1971 to 1973 would provide "a sufficiently long experimental period to determine public acceptance, practicality and economic profitability of rail passenger service" and that "Federal assistance to Amtrak already has surpassed the levels envisaged when the system was established." With reference to the $9.1 million, OMB replied that Amtrak had not yet requested it, and that "in assessing the current need for the $9 million, it will be necessary to consider the entire role of rail passenger service."

By March 15, 1973, the Dept. of Transportation must provide a detailed report on Amtrak's effectiveness and recommendations for service beyond next June 30. Amtrak has already indicated that it will not seek to drop any of its present routes after the end of the "experimental period" next June 30.

In one of the most important published articles on the state of Amtrak funding and politics in recent months, U.S. News & World Report magazine (Dec. 4) said that the next Congress is expected to be as sympathetic to Amtrak as the last one, but the article makes it clear that the White House is the prime enemy of Amtrak funding. The magazine said that the system Amtrak will propose beyond June 30, 1973 will be of about the same number of route miles as the present one, but that three money-losing routes are "primary candidates for the ax": Chicago-Newport News, Chicago-Florida, and Chicago-Houston. On the other hand, lines favored for increased service are four radiating from Chicago: to St. Louis, Cincinnati, Detroit, and Carbondale, Illinois.

ROGER LEWIS PROMISES CHICAGO A TURBOTRAIN

Amtrak President Roger Lewis delivered a major address to the Chicago Executives Club Dec. 1 (see QUOTES, RTN Nov. 6) entitled "Amtrak at Two." In informal conversation after the address, Mr. Lewis told Chicago Tribune reporters that a Turbo Train would be in operation on one of the routes out of Chicago in the near future. In early November Mr. Lewis traveled to France to inspect the French Turbos, said to be mechanically more reliable than the American-made model. There is speculation that Amtrak may attempt to purchase some of the trains from France. Lewis said that Amtrak would buy new Turbos soon, in addition to self-propelled cars and other equipment.

But the major thrust of Mr. Lewis's address was to point out the advantages of rail passenger service in the U.S. under present and future conditions of population growth, congestion, and depletion of fuel resources. He emphasized that the demand for rail service in the future is likely to grow faster than the overall market for transportation facilities, including highway.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

COAST STARLIGHT goes into daily service with the beginning of the Christmas season, and it will continue to run daily for an "indefinite period" beyond that, says Amtrak. The first daily train leaves Los Angeles northbound Dec. 14..... VERY IMPORTANT legislation will be introduced into Congress in January by pro-train Senators Vance Hartke and Lowell Weicker, they announced Nov. 21. The legislation is in two parts, costing $5.5 billion. The first part would upgrade Northeast Corridor tracks to allow the full speed potential of the METROLINERS and TURBOS, up to 150mph, this completed in time for the nation's bicentennial in 1976. Then the development of tracked air cushion vehicles for the same corridor by 1986 (that's beyond 1984) to provide speeds of up to 400mph. Frankly, the second part seems screwy to us. What would they do with all the airlines out of business? Look for much comment and debate on high-speed trains in the media in the coming weeks..... PANAMA LIMITED derailed somewhere in Illinois Dec. 10, injuring several people. No further details at this time. That's the third derailment of passenger or commuter trains on Illinois Central (Gulf) in 18 months.....

* * *

STARTING DECEMBER 16 Vermont Ski Trains will run from N.Y. each Friday, returning Sunday. They will run to Brattleboro, Bellows Falls and Waterbury, VT..... EXPANSION OF Japan's Bullet Train system is planned. The 350-mile-long line will be extensively developed with three extensions by 1976..... PENN CENTRAL has been turned down on its bid to drop two weekday roundtrip commuter trains between Boston and Framingham. A decision on PC's plan to drop another train to Worcester is still forthcoming..... GRAND TRUNK will move its Detroit commuter depot two blocks east in January to make way for a riverfront development project. The present Brush Street station serves the Detroit-Pontiac line..... AMTRAK HAS hired John F. McLeod, former travel editor of the Washington Daily News, to a new position of travel editor of Amtrak..... FREEZING, SNOWY weather hit coastal California this December, a rare phenomenon. Snow lies on the ground outside as we write these lines. The COAST STARLIGHT came in from Seattle the other day running out of steam, as the facilities were frozen in Klamath Falls, and the train wasn't watered until it reached Oakland, where the water hoses had to be thawed with blowtorches. The SF ZEPHYR came in with snow still unmelted from passage thru the mountains, and went out again the next trip with ice and snow still on it..... NEW REGIONAL menus have appeared this month on the COAST STARLIGHT. Regional specialities offered are mainly seafood and sourdough French bread..... ROCK ISLAND ROCKET now offers private "suites" on the Chicago-Peoria run, to attract group and tour trade. The converted double-bedroom cars offer a table, four chairs, two sinks and toilets, and a coat closet. The suite costs only $2.60 round trip over coach fare. Five such private suites are available..... READER RAILROAD in Arkansas made its last scheduled run Dec. 2..... MOST EXPENSIVE rural freeway is how the highway under construction thru the Virgin River Gorge in Arizona is being billed. It will make the Las Vegas, Nev. to Salt Lake City drive 12 miles shorter, but is it worth the $100 an inch it is costing?..... WASHINGTON'S HOUSE of Representatives has its own $7 million subway train for Congressmen and tourists. On Nov. 30 its brakes failed and it hit the end of a barrier, injuring one passenger and the train operator.....

LONG ISLAND Rail Road went on strike Nov. 30, forcing 90,000 commuters to find other means of transportation. 5000-member Brotherhood of Railway Carmen are seeking a wage increase..... SAN DIEGO will be the site for construction of 3 new ferry boats to be used in commuter service between San Francisco and Marin County. They are expected to be operating by 1974..... POSTSCRIPTS TO George Hyko's RTN report on his coast-to-coast Amtrak adventure: the new white-and-blue pottery was removed from the BROADWAY LIMITED shortly after his trip, presumably because of its unsatisfactory quality. Also shortly after his trip, a Continental Trailways bus heading for Reno on icy Interstate 80 (paralleling Amtrak's rail route) skidded and overturned, injuring about 14 people. George's comments about using the highway over the Sierra make sense..... SOUTHERN PACIFIC is putting on a strong campaign to promote the idea that the railroad is putting in a good performance for Amtrak. The October SP Bulletin features a cover article on favorable passenger response to its trains.....

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PEOPLE MOVERS, personal rapid transit systems, and other far-out kinds of urban transportation have come under fire in New York. "Everything here is Buck Rogers," said Jaquelin Robertson, director of the Office of Midtown Planning and Development, according to the NY Times (Nov. 12) when she viewed an exhibit of advanced transportation systems on Fifth Avenue. What cities need is something that works now, not some pie-in-the-sky, exorbitantly priced system that won't be operative for years, is the gist of their argument, and we're inclined to agree. For example, right near here, San Mateo County has rejected a plan to upgrade SP commute service on the San Francisco Peninsula and provide better bus connections in S.F. from that line. Instead, San Mateo will ask the voters again to approve a BART extension to the area, a plan voted down a couple times before. We've nothing against BART, as our readers are well aware, but it seems to us when you have a good system going--and SP's commute system is good, except for lack of publicity and convenient connections--that you ought to try to improve it instead of kill it in favor of a non-existent new system. Incidentally, the city of Menlo Park has asked the California PUC to disapprove SP's proposed commute fare increase of 6-12%, and instead upgrade the service..... NOISE, SQUALOR, and pollution are what too many automobiles in cities create, say the British. The city of Nottingham, reports the L.A. Times, is planning to throw out the auto and bring in free buses to connect railway stations and bus depots with shopping centers. Other cities all over England are likewise experiencing a surge of disaffection with the smog-belching monsters..... FEDERAL SAFETY authorities have just reported on the wreck of the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS June 10, 1971, and found that a locomotive wheel had locked and slid 40 miles before the train eventually derailed. There was no wheel slip warning device working.....

IMPORTANT CANADIAN PASSENGER TRAIN DECISIONS

The Canadian Transport Commission, equivalent to our ICC, late in November ordered the CP, CN, TH&B, and Penn Central to continue their passenger train service in Eastern Canada. $10,000,000 in subsidies to support the service was approved, representing 80% of the claimed passenger train losses. Routes involved were nearly all the passenger routes between Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton and London.

CINCINNATI UNION TERMINAL

1933 - 1972
39 YEARS IN SERVICE

by Gregg Spindler

Cincinnati Union Terminal, deemed by many as the nation's most beautiful station, closed its doors for railroad passengers on October 28, as part of an Amtrak station move.

Construction began in 1931 by the Cincinnati Union Terminal Company, a consortium of railroads serving the area. The station opened in 1933, and the railroads that originally financed the mammouth structure reportedly are still paying mortgages on it. The station reached its prime with the influx of traffic brought by World War II, and suffered the same sickness as passenger trains and stations did throughout the fifties and sixties. The magnitude of the shift from trains to planes, buses, and cars is best evidenced by the drop in employment from over 2,300 to just 15 at the closing.

The fate of the station was sealed in the seventies when Amtrak came into being. Cincinnati's 18 trains of April 30, 1971, dwindled to 2 on May 1. Along with the trains went the stored equipment of 5 railroads and the ultra-rare Lima switchers which shuffled trains about the station and coach yard. The yearly upkeep of the terminal was simply too much for two trains to manage--over $600,000 a year. Amtrak announced in early October the station move to a new facility located on River Road (U.S.50) and Evans St., adjacent to a B&O freight yard. Ironically, the new station, about the same dimensions and architecture of a McDonald's hamburger stand, is located under an overpass.

The last night of operation was duly celebraied, with television coverage, local paper stories for a week or more before the closing, and reportedly, national magazines. Over 1000 people lined the platforms to watch Amtrak/Penn Central train 50, "the George Washington," arrive with a B&O E-8 and four cars, including a big, sky-blue GN dome, a UP coach, PC 10-6 "Navajo Valley" and an ex-SP diner-lounge in Amtrak red, white, and blue. It left approximately 30 minutes late because of difficulties at the reverse loop north of the station.

The future of the structure is uncertain, but the general consensus is that it will be saved, at least in part. Southern Railway has purchased the land under the concourse and will use it for its freight operations. The concourse will most likely be razed. The rotunda, waiting room, parking garage and office areas will probably remain in the event of purchase. As of now, there is talk of turning the station into a shopping mall, and the Cincinnati Board of Education has stated interests in it. The immediate future will see the terminal open for its three tenants, a movie theater (showing "classical" movies of the 30's), a hobby shop and a branch of the First National Bank of Cincinnati. It will remain well-guarded to prevent petty thefts by "historians" preserving railroadiana.

Perhaps the best summation of the closing was made by a ticket agent just before he closed his window, reflecting on his employment: "What can you say after 36 years".

Urban-Suburban Transit

THE FUSS OVER BART SAFETY CONTINUES

BART management met with state officials in November in hearings about the alleged lack of safety in the BART automatic train control system designed by Westinghouse Electric Corporation (see RTN, Vol. 2, No. 20). It was agreed that an independent engineering team would study the BART system to advise upon its safety and whether it needed another backup system in event of failure of the automatic train sensors. The question of safety was made sharper by the BART accident of Oct. 2 and the Chicago commuter train crash of Oct. 30.

Some observers here see the attacks upon BART at the present time as politically motivated. Railfan writer Harre Demoro of the Oakland Tribune complained that legislators, other pro-transit, who now attack BART would not be doing so if BART was running in their home territory.

Meanwhile a Westinghouse spokesman said Dec. 12 that he was confident the BART line would open to San Francisco as scheduled next September, and that Westinghouse would make good on their contract to BART without the added costs that state legislative analyst A. Alan Post predicted.

PROBE INTO ILLINOIS CENTRAL GULF COMMUTER WRECK

The National Transportation Safety Board held hearings in Chicago the first week of December on the ICG commuter train crash of Oct. 30, in which 45 people were killed. Among its conclusions were that the engineer of the rear train was speeding when his train struck the never-style train ahead that was backing into a station after inadvertently running past the platform. Investigators estimated that the rear train was traveling about 50mph, when it should have been doing 30mph under the conditions. However, the locomotive used on that train does not have a speedometer. In addition, the NTSB found, the lead train did not have a signalman with a red flag behind the backing train, contrary to railroad operating rules. The conductor of the lead train, who gave the order to back his train to the platform, took the fifth amendment when called on to testify at the hearings, refusing to answer any further questions on the grounds that his answers might incriminate him.

SAN FRANCISCO MUNI RAILWAY GETS A NEW TROLLEY BUS

A new electric trackless trolley, numbered 5001, has just been delivered to the San Francisco Muni and placed in operation. It is the first of a fleet of 210 the Muni plans to buy. The bodies and chassis are made by Flyer Industries of Winnipeg, Canada, while the motors are salvaged from the GE components of previously scrapped vehicles. The Muni's other trolley buses date from 1949 to 1952 and number 333. The vehicles are highly favored for San Francisco because of their pollution-free character, lack of noise, and accelerating ability on the city's steep hills. The new bus bodies are similar to others delivered to Hamilton, Ontario and Toronto. In addition, Dayton, Ohio bought one prototype model for testing.